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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8489
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2133
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1681
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 5060
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 5162
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RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 1653
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000957

SIPDIS

STATE FOR INL/HSTC; EAP/MLS; G/TIP
DEPT OF LABOR FOR ILAB
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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [KWMN](#) [KCRM](#) [KFRD](#) [ASEC](#) [PREF](#) [ELAB](#) [SMIG](#) [BM](#)
SUBJECT: BURMA: ENHANCING TIP COOPERATION WITH CHINA

REF: RANGOON 575

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Classified By: Economic Officer Samantha A. Carl-Yoder for reasons 1.4
(b and d)

Summary

¶1. (C) On December 22, the Burmese and Chinese Governments opened a second bilateral liaison office (BLO) on the Burma side of the border in Lwe Je, Kachin State. The GOB had planned to open three additional BLOs along the Thai-Burma border in 2008-2009, but this plan is now on hold until the new Thai Government signs the draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for bilateral cooperation on trafficking issues. Police Col. Sit Aye, Director of the Burmese Anti-Trafficking Unit, requested USG assistance to urge the new Thai Government to focus on improving coordination with the GOB on trafficking in persons (TIP). End Summary.

Improving Burmese-Chinese TIP Coordination

¶2. (SBU) During the past two years, the GOB has taken steps to address the trafficking of Burmese persons, both within Burma and across borders. Col. Sit Aye, Director of the police-led Anti-Trafficking Unit (ATU), which falls under the Ministry of Home Affairs, told us the ATU has increased monitoring of movements of people over the Thailand-Burma and China-Burma borders. However, the ATU's staff is limited and cannot cover the entire porous border, he admitted. Consequently, the GOB has made it a priority to establish BLOs along the borders with China and Thailand to enable the governments to share information about trafficking,

narcotics, and other transnational crimes (Reftel). The first Burma-China BLOs were established in Muse, Burma and Ruili, China in July 2007. According to Col. Sit Aye, BLO staff in 2007 successfully assisted more than 25 Burmese women and children who were being trafficked into China.

13. (SBU) The Burmese and Chinese Governments on December 22 inaugurated a second BLO on the Burma side of the border in Lwe Je, Kachin State. According to Col. Sit Aye, six Burmese staff from Customs, Immigration, the ATU, and the Anti-Narcotics Task Force will operate the Lwe Je BLO. The Burmese police will teach Chinese to the six officials, although Col. Sit Aye noted their Chinese counterparts based in Ruili speak fluent Burmese. Using Chinese cell phones, computers with internet, and motorbikes provided by China, Burmese law enforcement officials plan to coordinate with the Chinese officials to improve detection and repatriation of trafficking victims, as well as prevent narcotics smuggling. In 2007, the Burmese ATU in Kachin State assisted in the repatriation from China of 14 Burmese trafficking victims (Reftel). Col. Sit Aye expressed confidence the new BLO will assist additional Burmese victims and help prevent trafficking across the Chinese-Burma border.

Still No MOU with Thailand

14. (C) While the ATU estimates that the number of Burmese trafficked to China increases annually based on the number of cases they investigate (official numbers are unavailable), Thailand remains the primary destination for Burmese trafficking victims, according to Col. Sit Aye. Although the GOB wants to open BLOs in Tachilek in Shan State, Myawaddy in

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Kayin State, and Kauthaung in Taninthayari Division) the three main crossing points for Burmese into Thailand - Col Sit Aye stated that the Government of Thailand first wants a formal MOU outlining law enforcement cooperation procedures. According to Col. Sit Aye, after more than a year of negotiation, the previous Thai Government approved the final version of the MOU in September. The Burmese and Thai Governments were to sign the MOU in October until Thai politics derailed the signing ceremony, he noted.

15. (C) Col. Sit Aye requested that the USG urge the new Thai Government to make coordination on trafficking in persons with the GOB a priority.

Comment

16. (C) The primary trafficking concerns in Burma relate to military-perpetrated forced labor and child soldier recruitment, where considerable problems remain. In contrast, the Burmese police force appears committed to preventing and responding to the trafficking of Burmese citizens across borders and even within the country. The ATU, with justification, cites the opening of an additional BLO as further demonstration of this commitment. While the new BLO along the China border is a positive development, the Burmese ATU will need to improve coordination with the Thai Government, since the majority of Burmese victims are trafficked to Thailand for both employment and sexual exploitation. The ATU will continue to coordinate informally with Thai authorities, but we agree that a formal mechanism with Thailand would give the ATU additional tools -- including the ability to create new BLOs -- to combat trafficking into Thailand.

VAJDA